

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 7, 2003

Mr. James Connaughton
Council on Environmental Quality
The White House
Washington DC 20503

Dear Mr. Connaughton:

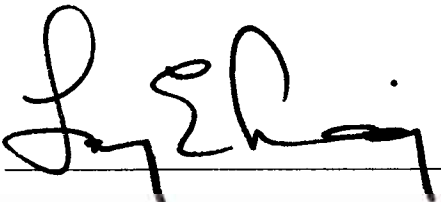

We would like to request that the Council on Environmental Quality review the possibility of developing a Categorical Exclusion for grazing permits. In particular, we ask the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management to collect the data needed to establish the permissible scope of Categorical Exclusions for permit renewals.

Ranchers have been grazing land in the West for more than 100 years. The whole region, many communities, and even more families have grown up with ranching as an integral part of their character and economic livelihood. We understand that the ranching interest in using public lands must be balanced with the need for responsible resource stewardship and credible environmental analysis of the impacts of grazing.

We also believe that the livelihood of public land ranchers should not be threatened because a grazing permit is interrupted to complete analysis required under the National Environmental Policy Act. For this reason, we ask the Administration to help keep public land ranching economically viable by seeking to develop and apply Categorical Exclusions to as many grazing permits as possible consistent with the law.

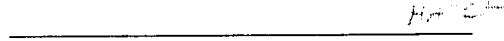
Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

THOMAS

ADMINISTRATIVE

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Cc: Secretary Gail Norton
Secretary Ann Veneman
Undersecretary Rebecca Watson
Undersecretary Mark Rey